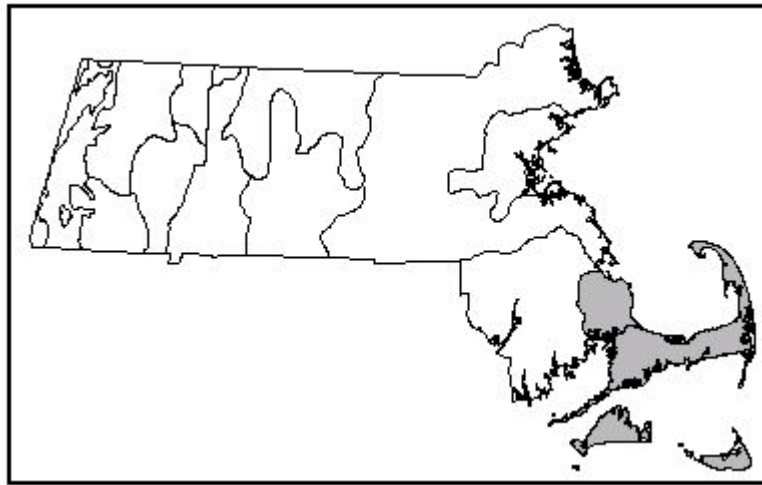


**Community Name:** SEA-LEVEL FEN  
**Community ELCODE:** CP2B0B3000  
**SRANK:** S1



**Concept:** Herbaceous/graminoid peatlands that occur at the upland edges of ocean tidal marshes. The combination of upland freshwater seepage and infrequent salt or brackish overwash produces a mixed plant community of freshwater and estuarine species.

**Environmental setting:** Sea-level fens occupy the interface between estuarine marshes and upland seepage slopes, and therefore have a distinct species assemblage including both estuarine and palustrine species. There are two hydrologic influences: acidic freshwater seepage from the uplands and periodic salt or brackish overwash from the adjacent marsh. Both are needed to produce the combination of species observed in sea-level fens.

**Vegetation Description:** Probable community type in Massachusetts, but vegetation descriptions are lacking. There are two probable occurrences reported from Martha's Vineyard that have saltmarsh spike-sedge (*Eleocharis rostellata*) co-occurring with acidic fen species. Plot data are needed. Ludwig (1995) described the flora of sea-level fens from Virginia, Delaware, New York, and Connecticut. He described three diagnostic species: saltmarsh straw-sedge (*Carex hormathodes*), saltmarsh spike-sedge (*Eleocharis rostellata*), and saltmarsh-threesquare (*Scirpus americanus*). Other common species include: New York aster (*Aster novi-belgii*), twig-sedge (*Cladium mariscoides*), spatulate-leaved sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), Canada rush (*Juncus canadensis*), pondshore-rush (*Juncus pelocarpus*), swamp-candles (*Lysimachia terrestris*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*), white beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), swamp-rose (*Rosa palustris*), common threesquare (*Scirpus pungens*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), and marsh St. John's-wort (*Triadenum virginicum*). [State Historical, deceitful spike-sedge (*Eleocharis fallax*) listed as common in more southern occurrences.]

**Associations:** No associations have been described in Massachusetts.

**Habitat values for Associated Fauna:** More information is needed.

**Associated rare plants:**

ELEOCHARIS FALLAX	DECEITFUL SPIKE-SEDGE	H
ELEOCHARIS ROSTELLATA	BEAKED SPIKE-SEDGE	- WL

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**Associated rare animals:**

METARRANTHIS PILOSARIA	COASTAL SWAMP METARRANTHIS MOTH	SC
VERTIGO PERRYI	OLIVE VERTIGO	SC

**Examples with Public Access:** Possible on Martha's Vineyard and Buzzard's Bay.

**Threats:** Alteration to the natural hydrologic regime. Development in the uplands may have negative effects on upland seepage.

**Management needs:** Maintain natural hydrology and upland buffer.

**Synonyms**

**USNVC/TNC:** Cladium mariscoides-Drosera intermedia-Eleocharis rostellata herbaceous vegetation [CEGL006310].

**MA [old name]:** Not described.

**ME:** Not described.

**VT:** Not described.

**NH:** Not described.

**NY:** Sea-level fen.

**CT:** Cladium mariscoides-Drosera intermedia-Eleocharis rostellata community?

**RI:** Sea-level fen.

**Golet & Larson, 1974:**

**Other:**

**Author:** J. Kearsley **Date:** 7/21/99